



INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 : E21B 43/10, F16L 55/16, E21B 17/00		A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/50733
			(43) International Publication Date: 31 August 2000 (31.08.00)
<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/US00/04684</p> <p>(22) International Filing Date: 24 February 2000 (24.02.00)</p> <p>(30) Priority Data: 60/121,451 24 February 1999 (24.02.99) US</p> <p>(71) Applicant: SHELL OIL COMPANY (US/US); P.O. Box 2463, 900 Louisiana Street, Houston, TX 77252-2463 (US).</p> <p>(72) Inventors: NAZZAI, Gregory, Richard; 3918 Laurel Rock Drive, Kingwood, TX 77345 (US). FRANK, Timothy, John; 16211 Hickory Point Road, Houston, TX 77095 (US). COON, Robert, Joe; 4603 Misty Hollow Drive, Missouri City, TX 77459 (US).</p> <p>(74) Agent: STEINBERG, Beverlee, G.; Shell Oil Company, P.O. Box 2463, 900 Louisiana, Houston, TX 77252-2463 (US).</p>			<p>(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).</p> <p>Published <i>With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i></p>
<p>(54) Title: INTERNAL JUNCTION REINFORCEMENT</p> <p>(57) Abstract</p> <p>An internal junction stabilizer is formed with an outer dimension less than the internal bore of a junction to be strengthened. The stabilizer is inserted into the junction, and expanded into tight fit. Multiple stabilizers may be expanded one inside another to form a laminate for reinforcement in high pressure applications. Each layer of metal expanded to the next outermost section provides an additive effective on the mechanical properties of the junction. Expansion can be performed in a number of ways, including mechanical, hydraulic, explosive methods. Use of directional or selective swaging can be used to further effect a fit. Further embodiments of the invention include the use of sealing compounds, elastomers, and plastics to effect a hydraulic seal and fill gaps for strength purposes.</p>			

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Latvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MC	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece	ML	Mali	TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	MN	Mongolia	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MR	Mauritania	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MW	Malawi	UG	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MX	Mexico	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	NE	Niger	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NL	Netherlands	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NO	Norway	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NZ	New Zealand	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	PL	Poland		
CM	Cameroon	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CN	China	KZ	Kazakhstan	RO	Romania		
CU	Cuba	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
CZ	Czech Republic	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DE	Germany	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
DK	Denmark	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		
EE	Estonia						

DESCRIPTIONINTERNAL JUNCTION REINFORCEMENTTechnical Field

The present invention relates to a reinforcement insert for joints in piping and the like and in particular to a method 5 for forming and placing such an insert.

Background Art

It is a well-known fact that joints in piping are their weakest points and that this is the main point of wear and subsequent leakage. The term "joint", as used herein, is intended 10 to cover the part or device located at the point where a first pipe is coupled, joined, and/or connected to two or more pipes for the purposes of splitting the flow path from the original single flow path to two or more flow paths regardless of the relative proportions. The joint itself can be weakened to the 15 point of rupture by pressures within the pipe. Also, joints are the points of highest wear when any kind of erosive material is passed through the piping. This further applies to build up of materials at the joints, which materials can also cause degeneration of the joint. Heretofore the answer to the problem 20 of degeneration of pipe joints has been either the replacement of the joint or attempting to enclose the joint within some kind of jacketing. However, both of these approaches are often unsuitable, for example in wells.

One example of the prior art for using a mandrel to 25 expand a pipe is U. S. Patent No. 5,366,012 which describes a method of completing uncased sections of a borehole by placing, at a predetermined position in the borehole, a slotted liner which is provided with a plurality of overlapping slots. The upper end of the liner is fixed in place and an upwardly tapering 30 expansion mandrel is drawn upwardly through the slotted liner expanding it outwardly to engage the walls of the borehole.

Another use of a mandrel to expand pipe is U.S. Pat. No. 5,348,095 in which the mandrel is driven downwardly to expand the pipe. While these concepts may work for straight sections of piping, clearly it would not be readily adaptable for pipe joints.

Another method for creating sealing between a lining and borehole, casing or pipeline is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 5,494,106. This consists of a deformable annular seal which is put in place in a deformed or contracted state, which does not 10 impede insertion. During expansion of the seal it is hardened to form a substantially permanent repair. However, this patent does not suggest how this technology could be applied to pipe junctions to create an improved seal, particularly at the joints and/or seams of the junction where leakage is most likely to 15 occur.

U.S. Pat. No. 3,358,769 show another pipe lining which is inserted into the pipe in a folded or collapsed state and then set when in place. However, this patent does not suggest how such a concept could be applied to a pipe joint.

Another method for inserting a lining into a casing is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 5,454,419 in which a tubular polymeric material is lowered into the well in a stretched condition, due to a series of weights attached to the leading end. When properly positioned, the weights are released and the tubular material 25 returns to its normal condition in which it presses against the walls to the borehole. There is not suggestion of how this method could be applied to junctions with multiple legs.

The present invention provides a means to overcome problems not addressed nor solved by the prior art by providing 30 a technique for applying a reinforcing liner to a pipe junction and, in particular, to a pipe junction which can only be reached through the bore of the pipe.

Disclosure of the Invention

The present invention provides an expandable reinforcement stabilizer for joints in pipes and the like, said stabilizer comprising:

- 5 a single member of substantially imperforate, deformable material having a first body portion and at least a pair of integral secondary body portions joined to one end of said first body portion and depending therefrom at a predetermined angular relationship
- 10 The internal junction stabilizer, according to the present invention, utilizes at least one expandable section that is inserted through the bore of a pipe and then expanded in place in the junction to both strengthen and seal the junction. Multiple sections may be expanded inside one another to form a
- 15 laminate to reinforce and provide higher integrity in high pressure applications. The subject invention provides reinforcement to current high stress points or stress risers, which are the weak points in current designs of multilateral junctions. Each layer of metal expanded within the junction
- 20 provides an additive effective on the overall mechanical properties of the junction. Expansion of the subject internal junction stabilizer can be performed in a number of ways, including mechanical, hydraulic, and explosive, as well as an "unfolding" operation or plastic expansion application. Use of
- 25 directional or selective swaging can be used to further effect a tight fit. Further embodiments of the invention include the use of sealing compounds, elastomers, and plastics to insure a hydraulic seal and fill gaps for strength purposes. These all act to provide bonding of the reinforcement member to the main bore
- 30 and laterals of the junction.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

5 Fig. 1 is a diagrammatic vertical section through a typical pipe junction showing the subject stabilizer prior to placement; and

Fig. 2 is a section similar to Fig. 1 with the stabilizer in place and fully expanded.

Detailed Description of a Preferred Embodiment

10 Turning now to the drawings, pipe joint 10 has a main bore 12 and a pair of diverging legs 14, 16. While the intersection 18 is shown as rather substantial, this is not usually the case, particularly for fabricated junctions. The intersection 18 is, in fact, the weakest point in any junction.

15 This is the point where pressures within the junction and the materials flowing through the junction will have their most destructive effect. Fig. 1 also shows, in a collapsed state, the stabilizer insert 20 which has a main body portion 22 and a pair of depending legs 24, 26.

20 The stabilizer insert would be placed into the junction in a collapsed or retracted state by any of the means well known in industries utilizing pipes. The above-mentioned patents suggest several different methods for reducing the outer diameter of an insert prior to inserting it into position within a pipe.

25 These known techniques would also be utilized to properly orient the insert so that the legs 24, 26 pass into legs 14, 16 of the joint 10. The insert would then be expanded, by any of the techniques discussed below, to tightly engage the entire inner surface of the junction.

30 The internal junction stabilizer can utilize multiple expanded sections sequentially expanded, one inside another, to reinforce a joint in order to provide higher integrity in high

pressure applications. Likewise, stabilizers can be added at a later time should the original stabilizer develop a defect. Each layer of metal expanded against the next outermost section provides an additive effective on the mechanical properties of 5 the junction. The subject internal junction stabilizer is applicable in both preformed and custom fit junctions and, while only two diverging legs of a junction are shown, there is no reason why the present invention could not be applied to junctions having any number of diverging legs. In fact, junctions 10 with more than two legs would most likely be weaker than a two-leg junction and therefor be more in need of reinforcement.

Expansion of the internal junction stabilizer can be performed in a number of ways and the mode of expansion would largely depend upon the material used to form the stabilizer. For 15 example, almost any known mechanical, hydraulic, or even explosive method could be used to expand metal stabilizers. Further "unfolding" operations or plastic expansion could be used, again depending upon the materials, the condition of the junction, and the application of the junction. Use of directional 20 or selective swaging would also be options to achieve the desired fit.

Further embodiments of the invention could include sealing compounds, elastomers, and plastics materials to effect a hydraulic seal and fill gaps for strength purposes. These all 25 act to provide bonding of the junction stabilizer to the main bore and laterals of the junction.

After a multilateral is made, the reinforcing stabilizer is run in the pipe bore, positioned inside the junction depending into the legs thereof, and expanded outward 30 to clad against the initial junction configuration.

The present invention can be accomplished with a variety of material well know to those skilled in the art. For

example, when pressure is to be maintained within the junction, then an expandable metal would be preferred. This could be applied by inserting a collapsed member and then expanding it through the use of mandrels and the like. Similarly, an explosive 5 charge could be utilized to create a concussive force sufficient to drive the metal tightly against the walls of the junction. It would also be possible to use memory metals which can be formed, stabilized, compacted, and restored to their original shape lining the walls of the junction.

10 If the intention was to reduce friction with the material passing through the pipe and/or the erosive effects of the material on the pipe junction, then the junction could be coated with an epoxy resin or clad with an insert of plastics material. This could be applied by any of the well-known methods 15 such as in the form of a spray coating or sintering.

It might appear that the subject invention would require the use of means to orient the liner in order for it to be correctly placed in the joint. Such orientation means are well known in the drilling industry and need not be described in 20 detail here. There are many mechanical ways to accomplish orientation. For example, often the joint will form arms of two different diameters. This feature can be used to correctly insert the stabilizer into the junction. If the arms of the junction are equal in diameter, then one leg of the stabilizer can be made 25 slightly longer than the other to engage in the junction and allow rotation of the stabilizer into position for final insertion.

The present invention may be subject to many modifications and change which would occur to one skilled in the 30 art. Thus, the described embodiment should be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive of the scope of the subject invention as defined by the accompanying claims.

CLAIMS

1. An expandable reinforcement stabilizer for joints in pipes and the like, said stabilizer comprising:
 - a single member of substantially imperforate, deformable material having a first body portion and at least a pair of integral secondary body portions joined to one end of said first body portion and depending therefrom at a predetermined angular relationship.
2. An expandable reinforcement stabilizer according to claim 1 further comprising:
 - an orientator to orient said stabilizer for correct positioning of the stabilizer into the joint to be strengthened.
3. An expandable reinforcement stabilizer according to claim 1 or 2 wherein said stabilizer is formed from an metal alloy having memory wherein said stabilizer is formed in an original shape, memorized by the metal, the stabilizer is compressed to a smaller size so as to be insertable into the pipe, the stabilizer is positioned within the joint and the memory enabled to restore the stabilizer to its original shape.
4. An expandable reinforcement stabilizer according to any of claims 1-3 wherein said stabilizer is formed from plastics material, an epoxy material, metal readily deformable by an expansive force within the pipe, or metal deformable by mechanical forces applied from within the stabilizer.
5. A method for applying an expandable reinforcement stabilizer in joints in pipes and the like, comprising:
 - providing a single member of substantially imperforate, deformable material having a first body portion and at least a pair of integral secondary body portions joined to one end of said first body portion and depending therefrom at a predetermined angular relationship;

inserting said member into a pipe junction while in a state in which the outer dimensions of said insert are less than the internal dimensions of said joint; and

5 expanding said member in place to form a stabilizing reinforcement for said joint.

6. A method according to claim 5 further comprising:

orienting said stabilizing member for correct positioning of the stabilizer into the joint to be strengthened.

7. A method according to claim 5 or 6 wherein said 10 stabilizing member is formed from an metal alloy having memory wherein said stabilizer is formed in an original shape, memorized by the metal, the stabilizing member is compressed to a smaller size so as to be insertable into the pipe, the stabilizer is positioned within the joint and the memory enabled to restore the 15 stabilizing member to its original shape.

8. A method according to any of claims 5-7 wherein said stabilizing member is formed from plastics material, an epoxy material, metal readily deformable by a expansive force within the pipe, or metal deformable by mechanical forces applied 20 from within the stabilizer.

9. A method according to any of claims 5-8 wherein said stabilizing member is expanded by fluid pressure applied within said stabilizer.

10. A method according to any of claims 8 wherein 25 hydraulic deformation is used to expand said stabilizing member.

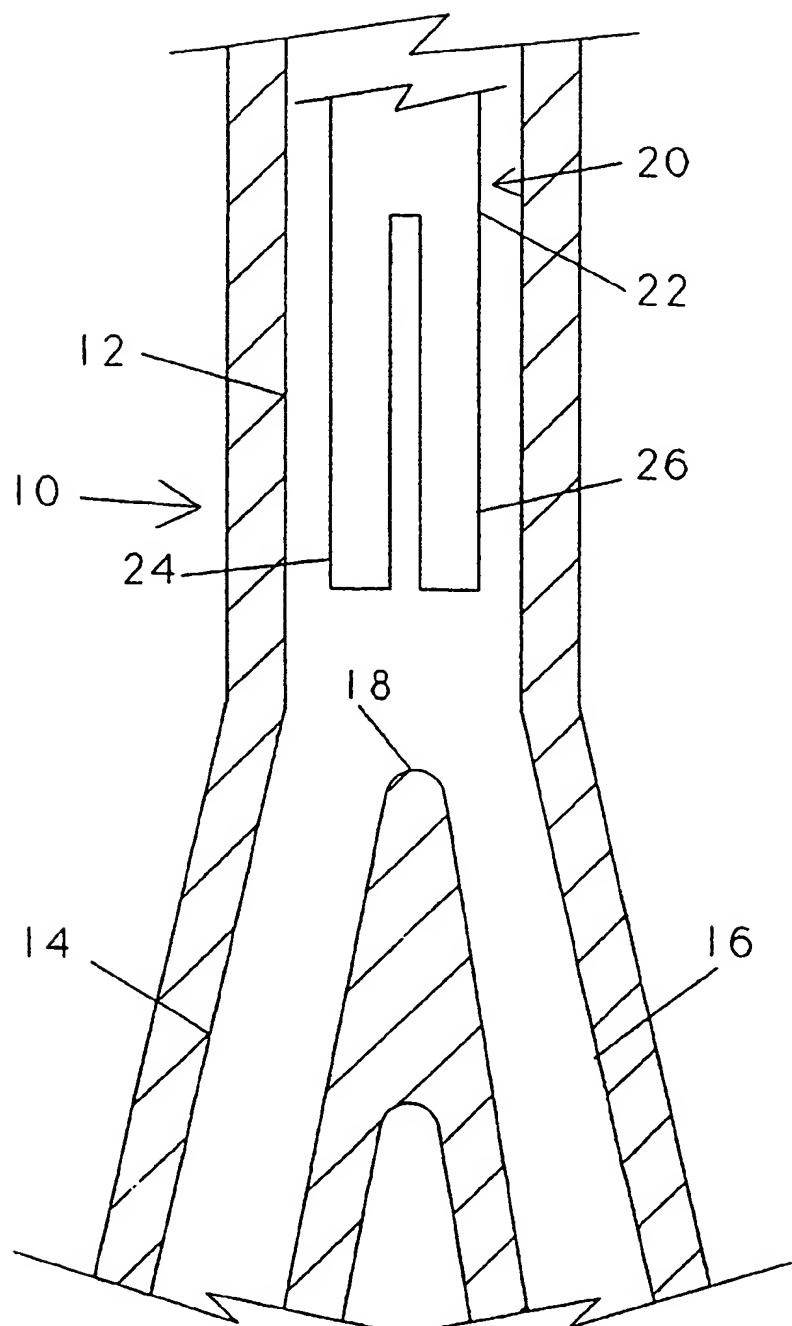


FIG. 1

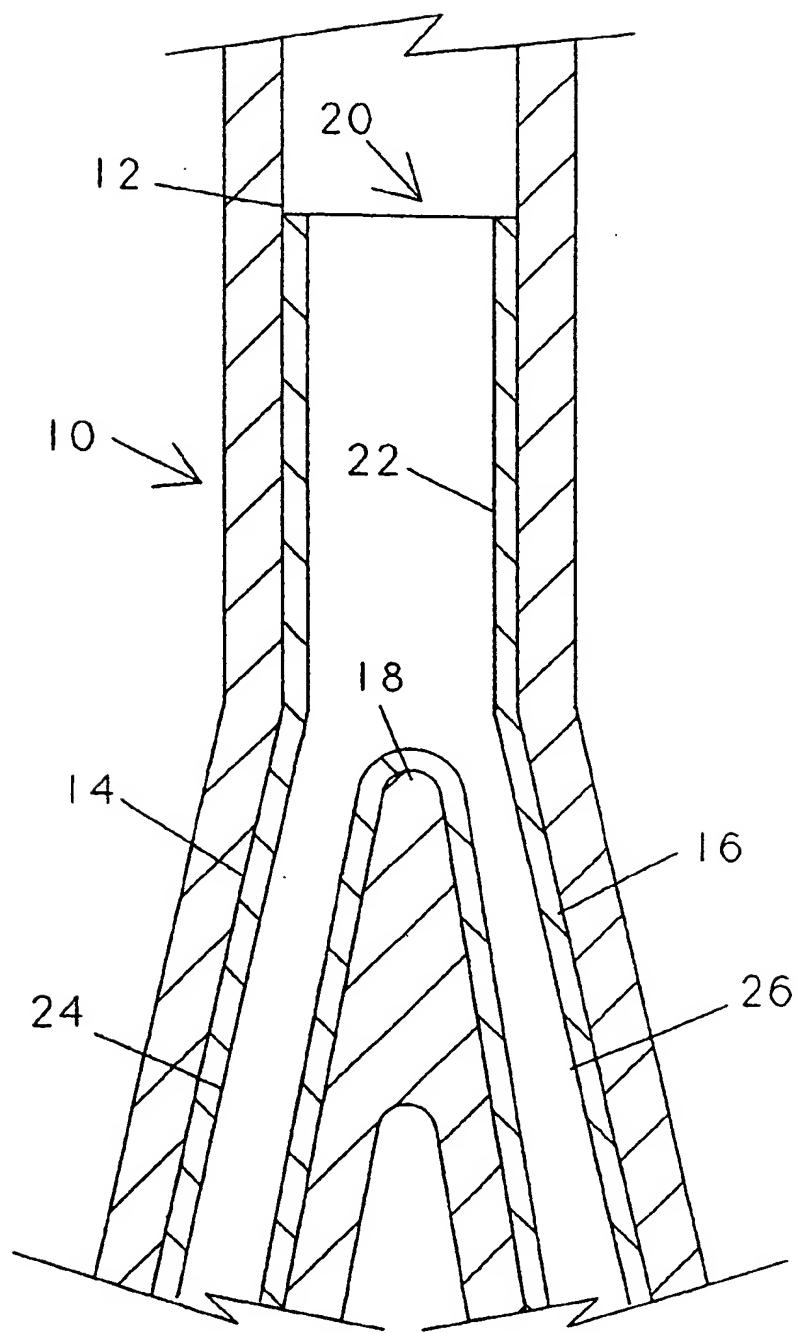


FIG. 2

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int. Appl. No
PCT/US 00/04684

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 E21B43/10 F16L55/16 E21B17/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 E21B F16L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5 322 127 A (MCNAIR ROBERT J ET AL) 21 June 1994 (1994-06-21) the whole document	1-10
X	WO 99 04135 A (MARATHON OIL CO) 28 January 1999 (1999-01-28) abstract; figures 1,2	1,5
X	US 5 318 122 A (MURRAY DOUGLAS J ET AL) 7 June 1994 (1994-06-07) abstract	1,5
A	WO 98 09054 A (BAKER HUGHES INC) 5 March 1998 (1998-03-05) the whole document	1-10
		-/-

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- *E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- *L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

- *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- *Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
- *Z* document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

22 June 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

29/06/2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentzaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Fonseca Fernandez, H

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No	PCT/US 00/04684
------------------------------	-----------------

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	EP 0 795 679 A (SCHLUMBERGER SERVICES PETROL ;ANADRILL INT SA (PA)) 17 September 1997 (1997-09-17)	

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)		Publication date
US 5322127	A	21-06-1994	AU 678910 B AU 3291395 A AU 663226 B AU 4804793 A CA 2120366 A,C DE 4393857 C DE 4393857 T DK 38794 A GB 2274864 A,B NL 9320006 T NO 941237 A WO 9403699 A		12-06-1997 30-11-1995 28-09-1995 03-03-1994 17-02-1994 18-02-1999 20-10-1994 06-06-1994 10-08-1994 01-11-1994 02-06-1994 17-02-1994
WO 9904135	A	28-01-1999	AU 6543998 A CN 1239531 T EP 0996812 A NO 995642 A		10-02-1999 22-12-1999 03-05-2000 17-11-1999
US 5318122	A	07-06-1994	AU 663277 B AU 4997993 A CA 2120368 A DE 4393849 T DK 38894 A GB 2275286 A,B NL 9320007 T NO 941238 A WO 9403701 A		28-09-1995 03-03-1994 17-02-1994 10-11-1994 06-06-1994 24-08-1994 01-11-1994 02-06-1994 17-02-1994
WO 9809054	A	05-03-1998	NONE		
EP 0795679	A	17-09-1997	US 5944107 A AU 720261 B AU 1488097 A BR 9701237 A CA 2198689 A CN 1182165 A NO 971093 A US 6056059 A		31-08-1999 25-05-2000 18-09-1997 22-09-1998 11-09-1997 20-05-1998 12-09-1997 02-05-2000

**This Page is Inserted by IFW Indexing and Scanning
Operations and is not part of the Official Record**

BEST AVAILABLE IMAGES

Defective images within this document are accurate representations of the original documents submitted by the applicant.

Defects in the images include but are not limited to the items checked:

- BLACK BORDERS**
 - IMAGE CUT OFF AT TOP, BOTTOM OR SIDES**
 - FADED TEXT OR DRAWING**
 - BLURRED OR ILLEGIBLE TEXT OR DRAWING**
 - SKEWED/SLANTED IMAGES**
 - COLOR OR BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS**
 - GRAY SCALE DOCUMENTS**
 - LINES OR MARKS ON ORIGINAL DOCUMENT**
 - REFERENCE(S) OR EXHIBIT(S) SUBMITTED ARE POOR QUALITY**
 - OTHER:** _____
-

IMAGES ARE BEST AVAILABLE COPY.

As rescanning these documents will not correct the image problems checked, please do not report these problems to the IFW Image Problem Mailbox.